

# St. Demiana



## The story of St. Demiana:

Near the end of the third century, there lived a Christian named Mark. He was the governor of el-Borollos, el-Zaafaran, and Wadi al-Saysaban districts in the Northern delta of the Nile River in Egypt. Mark had an only child named Demiana, and her father loved her dearly. When Demiana was still a young child, her mother died, and her father did his utmost to raise her a virtuous Christian.<sup>[1]</sup>

When she was 15, her father wanted her to marry one of his noble friends, however, she refused. She said she had devoted herself as a bride of Christ and intended to live in celibacy and serve the Lord. Demiana requested her father to build her an isolated house on the outskirts of the city where she could live with her friends, away from the world and its temptations.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Monastic life:

Her father granted her wish and built her a large palace in the wilderness.

## **Mark, the Governor, faces Diocletian Persecutions:**

The **Diocletianic** or **Great Persecution** was the last and most severe [persecution of Christians](#) in the [Roman Empire](#). In 303, the [emperors Diocletian](#), [Maximian](#), [Galerius](#), and [Constantius](#) issued a series of [edicts](#) rescinding Christians' legal rights and demanding that they comply with traditional religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal sacrifice, ordering all inhabitants to sacrifice to the gods. The persecution varied in intensity across the empire.

Mark the Governor (Demiana's father), was commanded to deny the Lord Jesus and worship the gods. He offered sacrifices and denied the faith of Christ. Demiana heard and was disappointed that her father, who taught her christianity has denied the Lord. She immediately went to meet her father and blamed him for this act, asking him to go back to Diocletian and reverse his faith. She preferred that her father would be martyred as a Christian rather than living as a non-believer of the Lord Jesus. Mark went and corrected his faith back to Christianity. Emperor Diocletian commanded that Mark would be beheaded and he was immediately martyred.

## **Demiana faces the Diocletian Persecutions:**

When Emperor [Diocletian](#) learned that it was Mark's daughter, St. Demiana, who had persuaded her father to return to worshipping Jesus Christ, he ordered one of his commanders, who was a prince, to attack her palace with one hundred soldiers. Diocletian ordered him: "First, try to convince her to worship our idols by offering her riches and glory, but if she refuses then threaten her, torture her, and even behead her and her virgins to make her an example for the other Christians.

Demiana saw the soldiers approaching, and prayed to God to strengthen their faith. She told her 40 friends: "If you are willing to die for Jesus' sake then you may stay, but if you cannot withstand the torments of the soldiers then hurry and escape now." The forty virgins replied, "We will die with you and love God with you.

The prince relayed Diocletian's message to St. Demiana by saying: "I am an envoy sent by Emperor Diocletian. I command you by his orders to worship his gods so that he may grant you whatsoever you wish."

St. Demiana shouted: "Cursed be to the messenger and him who sent him. ...There is no other God in heaven or on earth besides the one and only true God--the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit--the Creator, who has no beginning and no end; the omnipresent and omniscient God, who has the power to throw you in hell for eternal condemnation. As for me, I worship my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and His Good Father and the Holy Spirit--the Holy Trinity--I profess Him, ...and in His name I will die and by Him I will live forever."

The prince was enraged with Demiana and ordered her to be placed in the Hinbazeen (squeezing press) until blood poured on the ground. When they put her in prison, an [angel of the Lord](#) appeared to her, touched her body with his illuminated wings, and she was healed of all her wounds. She was subjected to additional tortures, but through it all her faith sustained her. The prince issued an order for Demiana and the 40 virgins to be beheaded.<sup>[3]</sup> St. Demiana received 3 heavenly crowns: for her virginity, her endurance of torture and her martyrdom.

## **The tomb of St. Demiana and the 40 Virgins:**

---

During the reign of Constantine the Great, his mother, Queen Helena visited the site of St. Demiana's monastery palace, where she had a church built over the tomb. This tomb church was consecrated by Pope Alexandros (Pope of Alexandria and 19th Coptic Orthodox Patriarch of the See of St. Mark), on May 20, Bashans 12 ([Coptic calendar](#)).

The original church was eventually destroyed but another has been rebuilt and still stands on the very same site to this day. Every year, many people visit St. Demiana's shrine, asking for her intercessions. The main season of visit is the period between 4th to 12th Bashans. (12–20 May).

St. Demiana was martyred at the age of 24 years old after 3 years of continuing persecution.